

# A BETTER WAY TO A SAFER CONNECTICUT

## THE FENTANYL CRISIS

JANUARY, 2022



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# THE FENTANYL CRISIS



The opioid epidemic is a public health and public safety crisis in Connecticut. It has destroyed lives and taken the lives of far too many. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl has caused this crisis to explode even further. Deaths from overdoses, and particularly overdoses from fentanyl, are increasing at alarming rates.

The recent shocking news of a child's death as a result of fentanyl ingested while in school is an alarming wake up call. It is heartbreaking and unacceptable. No parent should experience that loss and pain. No child should see that happen to their classmate.

Combatting the opioid crisis and the deadly nature of Fentanyl requires a comprehensive approach with continued support for substance abuse treatment, access to lifesaving measures, and strong penalties for the trafficking of such a deadly substance.

**IN CONNECTICUT, THERE WERE 1,374 CONFIRMED  
OVERDOSE DEATHS IN 2020,  
UP 14% OVER 2019**

**84% OF THOSE DEATHS INVOLVED FENTANYL,  
UP FROM 26% IN 2015, JUST 5 YEARS PRIOR**

**1,249 OVERDOSE DEATHS HAVE BEEN RECORDED  
IN 2021 (AS OF 11/2021); WITH TOTAL DEATHS  
EXPECTED TO EXCEED 2020**

(OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER)





## INCREASE PENALTIES FOR SELLING FENTANYL

Increasing penalties for the illegal sale of Fentanyl gives law enforcement another tool to get these drugs off our streets and save lives.

Under current law, Fentanyl and Fentanyl analogues are defined as narcotics, and therefore the law treats all illegal Fentanyl sales the same as any narcotic. But Fentanyl kills at a far greater rate and with far more potency than other narcotics.

Fentanyl is **up to 50 times** more powerful than heroin. It is deadly in even smallest of quantities, with the Drug Enforcement Administration estimating that even tiny doses, **as little as two milligrams, the size of two grains of salt, is a fatal dose for most people.**

This policy recommends increasing penalties and mandatory minimum sentences as the quantity of drug intended for sale increases.

This policy also recommends exploring whether more stringent policies are appropriate for sale of Fentanyl analogues, which are chemically altered and potentially more deadly drugs.

# SUPPORT SCHOOLS WITH GUIDANCE AND ACCESS TO NALOXONE

Connecticut schools must have the tools and guidance accessible to them to keep students safe.

This proposal would require the State Department of Education to develop model policies to allow for the use of Naloxone in schools including any needed training to administer Naloxone. Naloxone (Narcan) is a medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose.

The decision to keep Naloxone in schools would be made by each individual school district, with the state providing the guidance and support to obtain and administer the opioid antagonist in emergency life threatening situations.

## What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a medicine that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose. It is an opioid antagonist. This means that it attaches to opioid receptors and reverses and blocks the effects of other opioids. Naloxone can quickly restore normal breathing to a person if their breathing has slowed or stopped because of an opioid overdose. But, naloxone has no effect on someone who does not have opioids in their system, and it is not a treatment for opioid use disorder. Naloxone should be given to any person who shows signs of an opioid overdose or when an overdose is suspected. Naloxone can be given as a nasal spray or it can be injected into the muscle, under the skin, or into the veins.

*(National Institute on Drug Abuse)*





# AWARENESS AND SAFETY INVESTMENT

Connecticut will soon be receiving an estimated \$300 million in funds from the national settlement with the country's largest pharmaceutical distributors and drug maker as a result of litigation brought against these companies for their role in the opioid epidemic. This funding provides an opportunity to expand upon Connecticut's bipartisan efforts to tackle the opioid crisis.

This proposal recommends using a portion of settlement funds to establish a public awareness campaign on the dangers of fentanyl as well as using a portion of these funds to provide Narcan to districts that choose to keep it in their schools.

This proposal also includes prior recommendations by Senate Republican Leaders to establish protections to ensure these funds are used to combat the opioid epidemic, prevent addiction, and help people on the long road to recovery.

